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From: Carmen Assunto
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Subject: US EPA Region 6 News Release: Gold King Mine Release

Gold King Mine Release – New Mexico Response Activities

Contact: David Gray at 214-665-8120 or r6press@epa.gov

DALLAS – (August 8, 2015) EPA Region 6 deployed a federal on-scene coordinator from its emergency response team and scientific technicians under contract to EPA to assist the state in preparations for the potential impacts from the Gold King Mine release in Colorado.

The initial EPA team arrived on-site late in the evening on August 6 and immediately on August 7 began to assisting the state. The team began collecting samples at the drinking water intakes for Farmington and Aztec to help New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) establish baseline conditions in the river. Additional EPA personnel arrived in New Mexico later in the day on August 7. They immediately began assisting with sampling preparations as the state prepares drinking water systems to return to operations after the release passes downstream. The EPA will dedicate the personnel and scientific assets to assure that the community has the required assistance.

EPA will participate in an information meeting at the Farmington Civic Center exhibit hall at noon today, August 8.

EPA will also host a media conference call at 3 pm MT today, August 8. Reporters should contact David Gray at gray.david@epa.gov for more information.

EPA Region 6 is working closely with the NMED to evaluate possible impacts in New Mexico. EPA is providing technical and laboratory assistance. Potentially impacted water systems have been notified by State officials and precautions are in place to ensure drinking water in homes is protected. Each of the five drinking water systems in New Mexico are able to prepare and store drinking water in preparation for shutting down water intakes from the river. NMED is providing direct assistance to community water systems. Both NMED and EPA are closely monitoring the situation in New Mexico.

On August 5, 2015, EPA Region 8, based in Denver, Colorado, was conducting an investigation of the Gold King Mine. The intent of the investigation was to assess the on-going water releases from the mine and to treat mine water and to assess the feasibility of further mine remediation. The plan was to excavate the loose material that had collapsed into the cave entry back to the timbering. During the excavation, the loose material gave way, opening the adit (mine tunnel) and spilling the water stored behind the collapsed material into Cement Creek, a tributary of the Animas River.

The adit is still discharging lower flows into Cement Creek. EPA is rebuilding settling ponds to treat these flows – the upper pond was completed yesterday, and the lower pond by early today. EPA will treat the mine water diverted to the ponds with caustic soda and flocculent once the ponds are built.

EPA Region 8 has been coordinating with Region 6 and Region 9 and the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Southern Ute Tribe and Navajo Nation.

For the latest information, photos, and the data when available, visit www.epa.gov/region6.

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